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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002382

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SUBJECT: KING ABDULLAH ORDERS JORDANIAN ENVOY BACK TO BAGHDAD

REF: AMMAN 2297

Classified By: Charge Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) King Abdullah on March 21 ordered the Jordanian Charge to Iraq (currently in Amman) back to Baghdad. On March 22, the Jordanian Charge was making arrangements to travel to Baghdad, but said he plans to set up shop in a hotel given the poor security situation at the Jordanian embassy. Reflecting public Iraqi comments out of Algiers, the Iraqi mission in Amman expressed appreciation for King Abdullah's gesture. Nevertheless, the Iraqi ambassador returned to Baghdad on March 22 as ordered, although the mission expects him to return to Amman "in a few days." Despite the GOJ's effort to stem the dispute, defensive statements from various Jordanian quarters continued, suggesting that tensions have not fully dissipated. End Summary.

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KING ORDERS ENVOY BACK TO BAGHDAD  
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2. (U) Prime Minister Faisal al-Fayez announced on March 21 after a meeting with Iraqi President Yawar in Algiers that King Abdullah had ordered the immediate return of Jordan's envoy to Iraq to Baghdad "as a gesture of good will from Jordan in order to ease tensions between the two countries." Describing his meeting with Yawar as "excellent," Fayez said that he was assured "that Iraq's decision to recall its ambassador from Amman was for consultations and should not be seen at all as severing ties." Still sounding a defensive tone, however, he said he told Yawar that "terrorism has no nationality" and that "it was impossible that a Jordanian" could carry out an attack such as the suicide bombing that killed more than 100 Iraqis in Hilla. Meanwhile, in Amman, GOJ spokesperson Asma Khader praised the King's decision and repeated the comment by FM Hani al-Mulki (also in Algiers for the Arab League summit) that the crisis was nothing more than a passing "summer cloud" that would not shake Iraqi-Jordanian relations.

3. (C) FM Mulki told reporters on March 21 after meeting his Iraqi counterpart in Algiers that the two sides had worked out security measures for Jordanian embassy staff in Baghdad. As of midday March 22, Jordanian Charge to Iraq Dimai Haddad remained in Amman, but was in the process of making travel arrangements to return to Baghdad, possibly as early as March 23. He said he planned to lodge in a local hotel for at least for a month given the poor security situation at his embassy. Under no circumstances would he return to the embassy compound given his security concerns, and he accused Iraqi security forces of participating in the recent disturbances there.

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IRAQIS APPRECIATE THE GESTURE  
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4. (C) After learning on the evening of March 21 of King Abdullah's decision to instruct the Jordanian charge d'affaires to return to Baghdad, post passed this information to Iraqi Political Counselor in Amman, Abdul Khidhir al-Malki. Malki subsequently received separate confirmation of the King's decision from the Jordanian Foreign and Royal Court Ministries. Malki informed emboff later on March 21 that he and Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Attah Abdul Wahab (who remained in Amman) had notified the Iraqi Foreign Ministry of this development and requested new instructions on whether Ambassador Abdul Wahab should still return to Baghdad as ordered the day before (ref).

5. (C) According to Malki, Ambassador Abdul Wahab suggested to the Iraqi Foreign Ministry that he be allowed to stay on in Amman, but was finally instructed by Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister Sa'ad al-Hayani around midnight to return to Baghdad as originally scheduled. Accordingly, Ambassador Abdul Wahab departed Amman for Baghdad at 0800 on March 22. Despite the Ambassador's departure, Al-Malki expressed great appreciation

for King Abdullah's decision to quickly return the Jordanian Charge to Baghdad, and stressed that bilateral relations between the Iraqi and Jordanian governments remain close. In this context he speculated that Ambassador Abdul Wahab will return to Amman "within the next few days."

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JORDANIANS STILL ON THE DEFENSIVE  
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16. (C) Despite the GOJ's effort to tamp down the situation, the Jordanians remain defensive over Iraqi rhetorical attacks on Jordan, and some see an instigating hand behind recent events (Ahmad Chalabi and Iran are most often cited as the culprits). In comments to al-Arabiya satellite channel on March 21, Jordan's Foreign Minister openly blamed Iran for instigating the dispute, and Jordan's Senate issued a statement claiming that a "small and vindictive group instigated the crisis between Jordan and Iraq." It called on the Iraqi people to carefully examine allegations that Jordan was involved in terror acts. Lower House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali went further, calling on all Jordanians "to stand united against challenges posed by unfair campaigns against the Kingdom." He warned that "there was a mounting sense in the Arab world that Iraq was moving away from the Arab and Islamic nations, including Jordan," and urged Iraq to "return to the Arab camp." Islamic Action Front leader Abdul Latif Arabiyat cautioned against "external schemes ..aimed at sowing sedition among the people," according to press.

17. (U) Minimize considered.  
HENZEL